

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6352

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 07, 2008

Title: An act relating to criteria for siting a future institution of higher education.

Brief Description: Providing criteria for the siting of an institution of higher education in the north Puget Sound region.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Stevens, Rasmussen, Swecker, Murray, Marr and Spanel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/17/08, 2/7/08 [w/oRec-WM, DNP].
Ways & Means: 2/12/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That it be referred to Committee on Ways & Means without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Schoesler and Sheldon.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senator Berkey.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: A number of studies have been undertaken to determine the higher education needs of north King, Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties, dating as far back as 1988 when the University of Washington-Bothell was recommended, and subsequently established the next year. In 1996, the Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board recommended a multiple college and university center to serve the area. In 1997, the University Center was established at Everett Station. In 2005, University Center responsibilities were assigned to Everett Community College.

Also in 2005, the HECB was again directed to assess the needs of the Snohomish, Island, and Skagit County area (SIS). In November 2006, a consulting firm that had been contracted to work with a local advisory committee on plans for expanding higher education opportunities

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in the region submitted its final report to the HEC Board. The consultant team concluded that the needs of about 10,800 full-time equivalent students would be unmet by 2025, if students from the SIS counties participated in baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at the 1998 national average for all adults. The consultant report recommended investment in a four-year university with a polytechnical focus.

After receiving this report, the HEC Board issued its assessment of higher education alternatives for the SIS region in December 2006. The HECB recommended: (1) that the state's first priority should be to increase core funding and enrollment at the existing public colleges and universities; (2) that future decisions about creation of a new four-year campus should be made when the existing institutions reached their maximum capacity; and (3) that planning for a new four-year campus in the SIS region should continue in order to more fully describe the requirements, costs, and system impacts of creating a new campus.

A proviso in the 2007 Capital Budget Act directed the University of Washington (UW) to operate an additional branch campus in the SIS area, with a particular focus on education of upper-division and graduate students in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and other high-demand programs. The proviso directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the UW to assess potential sites for the new campus, and to submit siting recommendations and a preliminary academic plan to the Governor and Legislature by November 2007.

OFM retained a consultant to evaluate potential sites for the branch campus. Seventy-three potential site proposals were submitted, and that number was narrowed to the four most viable options: Pacific Station in Everett; Smokey Point in North Marysville; Riverside in Everett; and Cavalero in south Lake Stevens. The consultants evaluated and ranked these four sites according to the following criteria: (1) proximity to employment centers, existing or planned commercial and retail services, existing or planned housing, and potential interim locations; (2) site size, environmental conditions, and development potential; (3) proximity to existing or planned transportation infrastructure; (4) availability and cost of utilities; (5) sustainability; and (6) length of time required for development. Based upon this evaluation, the top two sites were separated by 15 points (Everett Pacific Station-179; Smokey Point-164).

Summary of Bill: When the Legislature considers the location of a higher education institution in the north Puget Sound region, priority consideration must be given to whether the site is centrally located in the Snohomish, Island, and Skagit County area; and to whether there is adequate space for parking and transit facilities. The Legislature must also consider: (1) availability of properly zoned land with sufficient acreage for a 5,000 student campus; (2) existing infrastructure; (3) environmental issues; (4) availability of interim facilities for startup; (5) availability of close-by internship programs; and (6) support from area communities and interest groups.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education): PRO: Studies done since 1988 have shown that north Snohomish County needs more higher education. The University Center in Everett is a failure. Island and Skagit County residents need more consideration. The first thing needed at the Everett site will be parking, but it should be classrooms. North Snohomish County has much more available land. Do not disenfranchise students in North Snohomish County. The consultant's report has errors in the transportation section and the landfill requirements. If the errors are corrected, Smokey Point comes out as the best site. We need to be looking forward 50-100 years instead of just worrying about tomorrow. The drive to Everett from Island County is an hour and a half. Population growth is moving north along the I-5 corridor. There is a relationship between where nurses go to school and where they settle. We should not be forgetting about rural nurses. A more complete campus for the future is possible in Smokey Point. Many jobs with the Tulalip Tribe will be available if the college is located farther north. More tribal students will take advantage of higher education if the campus is located farther north. The landfill requirements of the Smokey Point site are overestimated. Students should spend time in the classroom, not on the highway.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor, Senator Stevens; Representative Pierce; Becky Foster, Smokey Point; Mel Sheldon, Tulalip Tribes; John Dean, Patricia Terry, Island County; John Cronin, Smokey Point Chamber of Commerce; Vic Erickson, City of Arlington; Mary Swenson; Kevin Neilson; Bill Perkins; Donna Wright, City of Marysville City Council; Gloria Hirashima, City of Marysville; Sharon Dillon, Skagit County.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Marysville is much more centrally located in the three-county area than Everett, and would not compete for students with the UW-Bothell campus. The appraised land cost per acre is much lower, and the site is ready for immediate development, because there are no site clean-up issues. Marysville can accommodate much more future enrollment growth than the Everett site.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Dennis Kendall, Mayor of Marysville; Margaret Larsen, Mayor of Arlington; Mel Sheldon, Tulalip Tribal Chairman; Mary Swanson, City of Marysville.